

PANICUM RIGIDULUM VAR. *COMBSII* (POACEAE) IN LOUISIANA

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ABSTRACT

The occurrence of *Panicum rigidulum* var. *combsii* is documented in Louisiana from Natchitoches Parish.

KEY WORDS: Floristics, *Panicum*, Poaceae, Louisiana.

Hitchcock & Chase (1910) listed seven species for the Agrostoidae group of *Panicum*: *P. agrostoides* Spreng., *P. anceps* Michx., *P. combsii* Scribn. & Ball, *P. condensum* Nash., *P. longifolium* Torr., *P. rhizomatum* Hitchc. and *P. stipitatum* Nash. Fernald (1934; 1950) listed *P. combsii* as a variety of *P. longifolium*: *P. longifolium* Torrey var. *combsii* (Scribn. & Ball) Fern. Within the group Agrostoidae, Hitchcock (1951) included the same seven species as in Hitchcock's & Chase's (1910) treatment, but also included *P. abscissum* Swallen, and retained *P. combsii* at the species level. Gould (1975) considered *P. agrostoides*, *P. condensum*, *P. longifolium* and *P. stipitatum* to be synonymous with *P. rigidulum* Bosc ex Nees. Lelong (1984) retained varietal status for *P. combsii* within *P. rigidulum*.

Panicum rigidulum var. *combsii* (Scribn. & Ball) Lelong is not listed for Louisiana by Allen (1980) and MacRoberts (1988) found no reports of it for Louisiana. Based on a specimen taken at Lake Charles by Chase (*Chase 4434*, US), Hitchcock & Chase (1910) and Hitchcock (1951) included Louisiana within the range of this taxon treated as *P. combsii*. Additionally, Fernald (1934) listed a specimen of the taxon from New Orleans, but no information was provided on the collector, collection number, or the herbarium where the specimen was located.

A recent specimen of *P. rigidulum* var. *combsii* for Louisiana was collected in Natchitoches Parish, in dry, sandy soil of a longleaf pine (*P. palustris* Mill.) hillside, above a hillside seep, northwest of the intersection of Middle Branch Rd. and U.S. Forest Service Rd. 321, 2 Aug 1985 (*McKenzie 171* with L.E. Urbatsch, Annette Parker and Karla Wilzer, LSU; annotated by M. Lelong,

March 1989). This site is more similar to the "wet pine-barrens" designated for the taxon by Fernald (1950) than to the "marshes, shores of lakes and ponds" described as the habitat in Mississippi (Lelong 1986). The paucity of collections from Louisiana suggests that *P. rigidulum* var. *combsii* is rare in the state. It is likewise rare in Mississippi, where it is known only from Harrison County (Lelong 1986).

Within the typical subgenus of *Panicum*, *P. rigidulum* is recognizable by its short knotty bases or caudexes, often densely tufted culms, and strongly compressed sheaths and culms. *Panicum rigidulum* var. *combsii* differs from the more widespread and common typical variety by its narrower more pubescent leaves and larger spikelets. The former variety possesses adaxially pilose leaf blades usually 2-7 mm wide with fimbriate-ciliate membranous ligules, spikelets 2.6-3.7 mm long and usually purple, slender, erect pedicels.

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